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U.S. orders further JFK tests

By EARL GOLZ

The U.S. Justice Department said Saturday it will order further scientific examinations of the acoustical and film evidence that indicates the assassination of President John Kennedy in Dallas was a conspiracy.

The department responded to recommendations from the House Assassinations Committee, which expired one year ago.

The National Science Foundation has been asked to help set up "an independent scientific review" of the acoustical findings by the committee, justice department spokesman Robert Havel said Saturday.

The committee found that a Dallas police officer tape recorded four shots, not three as originally attributed to Lee Harvey Oswald, at the time of the assassination.

Havel also said a film of the assassination site made by an amateur photographer six minutes before the shooting in Dealey Plaza also will be tested by the justice department when it is obtained.

The film, taken by Charles L. Bronson now of Ada, Okla., may show two persons, not one, in the 6th-floor window of the Texas School Book Depository Building from where Oswald supposedly fired all the shots.

Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Ohio, chairman of the defunct assassinations committee, said Friday he had received a letter from the justice department Dec. 12 saying the panel wanted to conduct a limited investigation. The letter was written by Robert Keuch, special counsel to Atty. Gen. Benjamin Civiletti.

G. Robert Blakey, the committee's general counsel, said Saturday if the acoustical tests "come out that we made a mistake somewhere, I think

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that would end it. But there's no mistake, the findings are solid."

Acoustical experts told the committee that three of the four shots they detected on the police tape came from behind the presidential limousine on Elm Street and one from the grassy knoll area to the right side of the vehicle.

They reached their conclusions after recording the sounds of test shots fired from the two locations in Dealey Plaza during the summer of 1978. They compared their recordings with the Dallas police tape made when a police officer in the motorcade left his motorcycle microphone open during the time of the shooting.

The Warren Commission concluded in 1964 that Oswald was the lone assassin, firing an old Italian military rifle with a telescopic sight three times from behind the presidential limousine. The commission said the first bullet struck Kennedy in the back and the second in the head. A third shot went wild, it said.

However, a film taken by amateur photographer Abraham Zapruder showed the president's head snap backward in reaction to the head shot as though someone had been shooting from the front of the car. The film was kept under wraps until 1975 when Robert J. Groden, a film technician, enhanced the shooting sequence and began showing it publicly.

The film by Bronson and its possible significance was reported by *The News* during the fall of 1978, about two months before the House Assassinations Committee went out of business. While the committee's photo experts examined enhanced frames from the film, the committee by that time had spent almost all of its allotted $5 million and could not give the film proper computer analysis to determine whether two figures moving in the 6th-floor window were people.

Bronson's film was first viewed by the FBI within days after the assassination but returned to Bronson when an FBI agent said it "failed to show the building from which the shots were fired."

"The FBI has been in negotiations with Bronson or his lawyer to get the film and review it," Havel said Saturday. "But we do not have it yet."

Bronson's attorney, John Sigalis, said FBI agent Udo Specht of Dallas contacted him more than two months ago and led him to believe "I would be hearing directly from (the) justice (department) and I haven't heard back since that time."

Sigalis said he and his client "of course would be willing to cooperate" if the justice department "just respects Bronson's copyright ... There's no problem about it."

Blakey, who guided the committee into concluding that Oswald fired all three shots from behind the presidential limousine, has never seriously considered that the Bronson film showed two people in the window just before the shooting. His staff was not able to identify the person who was supposed to have fired the fourth shot from the grassy knoll. Blakey's staff concluded this shot missed the limousine.

The former committee chief counsel said he didn't "think they (justice department) are going to do anything with" the Bronson film. He said the "main thing they are going to do is satisfy themselves that our accoustics is correct — and then face up to the big question."

Havel said, however, the justice department intends to examine both the acoustical evidence and the Bronson film, adding that "the film has nothing to do with the acoustics."

The committee, which also investigated the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in Memphis, concluded the killing may have been the result of a conspiracy.

Havel said no justice department investigation of King's slaying is planned before a thorough review of the committee's voluminous reports.